

B. Claims

The following is a complete listing of the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and listings.

1. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a cleaning blade, the process comprising the steps of:

(1) drying a blade formed of a urethane resin so that the urethane resin has a water content of 1% by weight or less;

(2) after the drying, impregnating an isocyanate compound into the blade at least at a contact portion thereof, which said contact portion is to come into contact with a toner holding member, where the isocyanate compound is at a temperature at which it is in a liquid state;

(3) after the impregnation, blowing warm air or hot air on the blade surface to remove the isocyanate compound remaining on the blade surface, the warm air or hot air having a temperature not lower than the melting point of the isocyanate compound;

(4) further removing with a solvent the isocyanate compound remaining on the blade surface; and

(5) allowing the urethane resin that forms the blade to react with the isocyanate compound with which the blade stands impregnated, to form a cured layer below a surface of the blade that was contacted with the isocyanate compound,

wherein the cured layer is formed chiefly of allophanate linkages, and
wherein the isocyanate compound is 4,4'-diphenylmethanediisocyanate.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Previously Presented) The process for producing a cleaning blade according to claim 1, wherein the step (2) is carried out by immersing the blade in an isocyanate compound bath.

4-10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently Amended) The process for producing a cleaning blade according to claim 1, wherein a length of the cured layer in a free length direction is 30% to 80% of a free length of the blade and a thickness of the cured layer is 0.12 mm to 0.8 mm in a direction below a surface of the blade that was contacted with the isocyanate compound.